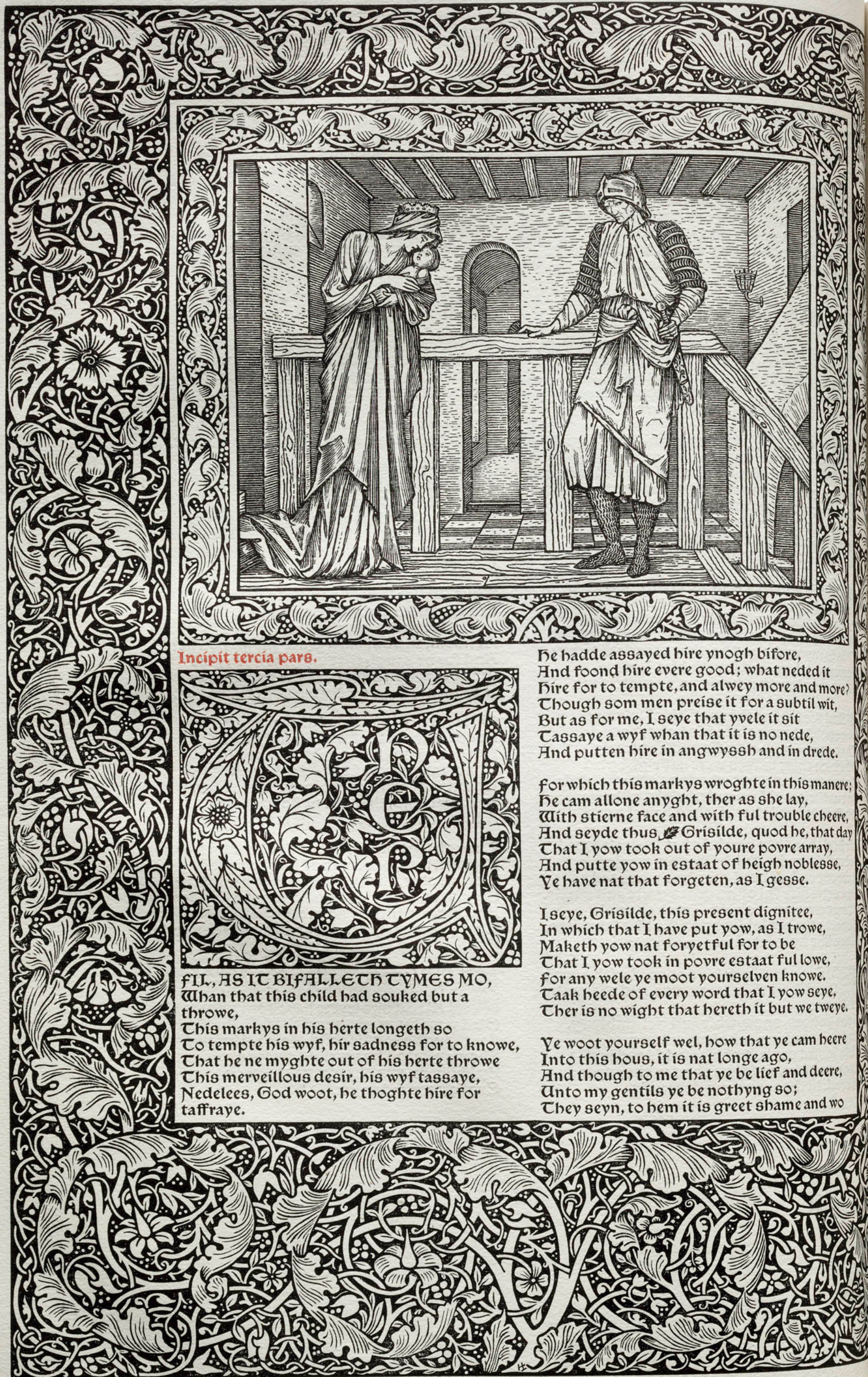




Incipit tertia pars.



PIL, AS IT BIFALLETH TYMES MO,
 When that this child had souked but a
 throwe,
 This markys in his herte longeth so
 To tempte his wyf, hir sadness for to knowe,
 That he ne myghte out of his herte throwe
 This merveillous desir, his wyf tassaye,
 Nedeless, God woot, he thoghte hire for
 taffraye.

He hadde assayed hire ynogh bifore,
 And foond hire evere good; what neded it
 Hire for to tempte, and alwey more and more;
 Though som men preise it for a subtil wit,
 But as for me, I seye that yvele it sit
 Tassaye a wyf when that it is no nede,
 And putten hire in angwyssh and in drede.

for which this markys wroghte in this manere,
 He cam allone anyght, ther as she lay,
 With stieme face and with ful trouble cheere,
 And seyde thus, Grisilde, quod he, that day
 That I yow took out of youre powre array,
 And putte yow in estat of heigh noblesse,
 Ye have nat that forgotten, as I gesse.

I seye, Grisilde, this present dignitee,
 In which that I have put yow, as I trowe,
 Maketh yow nat foryetful for to be
 That I yow took in povre estat ful lowe,
 for any wele ye moot yourselven knowe,
 Taak heede of every word that I yow seye,
 Ther is no wight that hereth it but we tweye.

Ye woot yourself wel, how that ye cam heere
 Into this hous, it is nat longe ago,
 And though to me that ye be lief and deere,
 Unto my gentils ye be nothyng so;
 They seyn, to hem it is greet shame and wo

for to be subgetts and been in servage
 To thee, that born art of a smal village.

And namely sith thy doghter was ybore,
 These wordes han they spoken doutelees;
 But I desire, as I have doon bifore,
 To lyve my lyf with hem in reste and pees;
 I may nat in this caas be recchelees.
 I moot doon with thy doghter for the beste,
 Nat as I wolde, but as my peple leste.

And yet, God woot, this is ful looth to me;
 But natheles withoute youre wityng
 I wol nat doon, but this wol I, quod he,
 That ye to me assente, as in this thyng.
 Shewe now youre pacience in youre werkynge
 That ye me bighte and swore in youre village
 That day that maked was oure mariage.

WHAN she had herd at this, she noight
 ameved,
 Neither in word, or chiere, or countenance;
 For, as it semed, she was nat agreved:
 She seyde, Lord, al lyth in youre plesauce,
 My child and I with hertely obeisaunce,
 Been youre al, and ye mowe save or spille
 Your owene thyng; werketh after youre wille.

Ther may nothyng, God so my soule save!
 Liken to yow that may displese me;
 Ne I ne desire nothyng for to have,
 Ne drede for to leese, save oonly ye;
 This wyl is in myn herte, and ay shal be.
 No lengthe of tyme, or deeth, may this deface,
 Ne chaunge my corage to another place.

GLAD was this markys of hire answering,
 But yet he feyned as he were nat so:
 Al dreary was his cheere and his looking,
 When that he sholde out of the chambre go.
 Soone after this, a furlong wey or two,
 He prively hath toold al his entente
 Unto a man, and to his wyf hym sente.

A maner sergeant was this privee man,
 The which that feithful ofte he founden hadde
 In thynges grete, and eek swich folk wel kan
 Doon execucioun on thynges badde.
 The lord knew wel that he hym loved and dradde;
 And when this sergeant wiste his lordes wille,
 Into the chambre he stalked hym ful stille.

Madame, he seyde, ye moote foryeve it me,
 Though I do thyng to which I am constreyned;
 Ye been so wys that ful wel knowe ye
 That lordes heestes mowe nat been yfeyned;
 They mowe wel been biwailled and compleyned,
 But men moote nede unto hire lust obeye,
 And so wol I; ther is namore to seye.

This child I am comanded for to take,
 And spak namore, but out the child he hente
 Despitously, and gan a cheere make
 As though he wolde han slayn it er he wente.
 Grisildis moot al suffren and consente;

k 3

And as a lamb she sitteth meke and stille,
 And leet this cruel sergeant doon his wille.

Suspectious was the diffame of this man,
 Suspect his face, suspect his word also;
 Suspect the tyme in which he this bigan.
 Alas! hir doghter that she loved so,
 She wende he wolde han slawen it right tho.
 But natheles she neither weepe ne syked,
 Consentyng hire to that the markys lyked.

But atte laste speken she bigan,
 And mekely she to the sergeant preyde,
 So as he was a worthy gentil man,
 That she moste kisse hir child er that it deyde;
 And in hir barm this litel child she leyde
 With ful sad face, and gan the child to kisse,
 And lulled it, and after gan it blisse.

And thus she seyde in hire benigne voys,
 Fare weel, my child; I shal thee nevere see!
 But, sith I thee have marked with the croys,
 Of thilke fader, blessed moote he be,
 That for us deyde upon a croys of tree.
 Thy soule, litel child, I hym bitake,
 for this nyght shaltow dyen for my sake.

I trowe that to a norice in this cas
 It had been hard this reuthe for to se;
 Wel myghte a mooder thanne han cryd, Alas!
 But natheles, so sad stedefast was she,
 That she endured al adversitee,
 And to the sergeant mekely she sayde,
 Have heer agayn youre litel yonge mayde.

Gooth now, quod she, & dooth my lordes heeste;
 But o thyng wol I prey yow of youre grace,
 That, but my lord forbad yow, atte leeste
 Burieth this litel body in som place
 That beestes ne no briddes it torace.
 But he no word wol to that purpos seye,
 But took the child and wente upon his weye.

THIS sergeant cam unto his lord ageyn,
 And of Grisildis wordes and hire cheere
 He tolde hym point for point, in short and
 pleyn,
 And hym presenteth with his doghter deere.
 Somwhat this lord hath routhe in his manere;
 But natheles his purpos heeld he stille,
 As lordes doon when they wol han hir wille;

And bad his sergeant that he prively
 Sholde this child ful softe wynde and wrappe
 With alle circumstances tendrely,
 And carie it in a cofre or in a lappe;
 But, upon peyne his heed of for to swappe,
 That no man sholde knowe of his entente.
 Ne whenne he cam, ne whider that he wente;

But at Boloigne to his suster deere,
 That thilke tyme of Panik was countesse,
 He sholde it take, and shewe hire this mateere,
 Bischyng hire to doon hire bisynesse
 This child to fostre in alle gentillesse;

133

The Tale
 of the
 Clerk of
 Oxenford